

FLIGHT JACKET

Vol. 6, No. 25

Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.

July 2, 2004

HMH-361 tests new weapon during Desert Talon

Story by Cpl. Paul Leicht

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION YUMA, Ariz. - Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 361 will be deploying to Iraq soon with a new weapon system under their wing.

The "Flying Tigers" of HMH-361, currently conducted training missions here as part of Desert Talon 2-04, and have added the M3M GAU-21 .50-caliber to their arsenal of CH-53E Super Stallion assault support rotary-wing aircraft and put the weapon system to the test.

"We're flying section flights so our aircrews can receive instruction and test fire the GAU-21 using the ramp-mounted cradle while practicing evasive maneuvers, threat reaction from the ground, section landings and gunnery skills over the Chocolate Mountain Impact Area," said Maj. Richard S. Barnes, assistant airframes maintenance officer, HMH-361. "The GAU-21 so far has performed perfectly for us without jamming at all."

The Marine Corps has been using the M2 Browning Machine Gun aboard its helicopters for years and it has performed very well, but the Department of Defense has been looking for a replacement weapon system with greater accuracy, a higher rate of fire and increased reliability, according to Gunnery Sgt. Kenneth W. Jourdan, CH-53E crew chief instructor, Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1.

The M3M GAU-21, designed and manufactured by the



A CH-53E from HMH-361 shows off a ramp-mounted M3M GAU-21 .50-caliber weapon system during a training flight over the Chocolate Mountain Impact Area June 21 during Exercise Desert Talon 2-04. Photo by Cpl. Paul Leicht

Belgian firm FN Herstal, performed superbly during Marine Corps testing in the Horn of Africa and production models are now being sent to units in the fleet, added Jourdan.

"There are some significant differences between the M2 and this weapon system," explained Jourdan while crouching behind a ramp-mounted GAU-21 on a "Flying Tigers" CH-53E. "The GAU-21 is an open bolt design so cook-offs are far less likely to occur. It has the capability to use 100, 300 or 600 round ammunition cans and has the capacity to fire all standard NATO .50 caliber ammunition.

It has an internal recoil spring, which means this weapon has roughly 60 percent less recoil than the M2 and significantly longer barrel life. The rate of fire is between 950 to 1,100 rounds per minute and it has the ability to maintain or increase the available fields of fire for each airframe."

Exhibiting great familiarity with the GAU-21, Jourdan said the GAU-21 is a weapon system rather than a machine gun because it has three parts: the machine gun itself, the medium pintle head or "soft mount" and the cradle, which is used to integrate the weapon into a particular aircraft or vehicle.

Capable of being mounted on a variety of platforms including the CH-46, CH-53, H-60, UH-1 and the MV-22, the GAU-21 has a flash suppressor, an optional integrated illuminator/laser spotting device that gives the GAU-21 day or night capability and the capability for dismounted operation by one person within two minutes or can be detached from the ramp in 20 seconds,

with practice, added a smiling Jourdan.

"(MAWTS-1) tested this weapon system earlier this year during Desert Talon (1-04) and the production model these Marines will be deploying with include several enhancements," Jourdan said. "The production model is lighter, weighing 80 pounds, is easier to set up and dismount and the ramp-mounting pad is lower for bringing the weapon system inside the aircraft. Put simply, this weapon system will provide a level of suppressive fire support not available before."

Iraqis take charge of country's fate

Story by John D. Banusiewicz

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - Sovereignty in Iraq passed from the Coalition Provisional Authority to the interim Iraqi government Monday morning, two days ahead of schedule.

In a 10-minute ceremony inside the heavily fortified "Green Zone" where coalition headquarters is located in Baghdad, CPA administrator Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III read a letter he had signed which dissolved the CPA.

"As recognized in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1546, the Coalition Provisional Authority will cease to exist on June 28, at which point the occupation will end and the Iraqi interim government will assume and exercise full sovereign authority on behalf of the Iraqi people. I welcome Iraq's steps

to take its rightful place of equality and honor among the free nations of the world," Bremer read.

Bremer boarded a helicopter shortly after the ceremony and later left the country aboard a military C-130 Hercules transport plane. It was unclear when newly appointed U.S. Ambassador John D. Negroponte would arrive in Baghdad to take charge of what will become the world's largest U.S. Embassy.

"This is a historic and happy day for us in Iraq," said Iraqi President Ghazi al-Yawar after receiving the transfer documents. "It is a day that all Iraqis have been looking forward to. This is the day that we take our country back into the international community. We want a free and democratic Iraq, and

See TRANSFER, page 10

celebrate the
4TH OF JULY
Safely and legally

Fireworks are illegal in San Diego County, including the area in and around Marine Corps Air Station Miramar.

See page 8 for a list of fireworks displays that will be happening in the greater San Diego area Sunday.

Inside

Weekend forecast from Miramar's weather station


76°/61°
Today


73°/61°
Saturday


73°/60°
Sunday

**Laser-precision
Death from
the Darkness**



Page 5

**Floating
museum lets
visitors 'call
the ball'**



Page 7

Q&A with new MCABWA commander

Brig. Gen. Carl Jensen shares his vision for MCAS Miramar days after assuming post

Interview by Staff Sgt Chad McMeen

MCAS Miramar Internal Chief

Q) What are your goals for Miramar during your command?

A) “My most important goal is to maintain and enhance the combat readiness of our tenant units and to do that by providing them with outstanding facilities, outstanding opportunities, to train and by giving them the tools they need and to increase their combat readiness.”

Another one of my goals here, to the extent that I’m permitted, will be to increase the family housing aboard MCAS Miramar, which is vitally important. It’s not big enough yet but we’re working towards the goal of adding 1,600 units on East Miramar.

Q) What would you like to tell the families of service members of this base?

A) Mission first, Marines and their families always! We will do everything within our power to ensure that the families are well taken care of while Marines and Sailors are forward deployed. It’s incumbent upon me and my command to ensure their safety and welfare and that they are well taken care of and I will do everything within my power to make sure that the family unit is as happy as they can be back here while their loved ones are deployed to a combat zone.

Q) What is your number one safety concern at work?

A) My largest concern is the alarming number of accidents and mishaps that we are having from Marines and Sailors who have recently come back from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Shortcuts that might have been taken in a combat zone



Brig. Gen. Carl Jensen speaks to his Marines after taking command of MCABWA. Photo by Cpl. Jeff Zaccaro

are no longer appropriate or required in a CONUS environment. Over time they will lead to accidents if continued.

Q) What is your number one safety concern off duty?

A) Off duty, I don’t think the message has changed in 30 years... it’s vehicular and motorcycle accidents. This is a tough area and we lose way too many Marines, Sailors and family members on these roads

and that has a significant impact on combat readiness. We cannot allow that to happen and we’re working with the safety programs and awareness programs to try to mitigate that trend, but I believe we have a long way to go. Of course this will be an enduring fight, it is never one that we’ll win entirely but we owe it to our Marines and Sailors to stay engaged in that fight and never lose the focus.

Q) Is there a message you would like to send to the community?

A) I’m interested in being the best possible neighbor that I can possibly be during my brief stewardship here at Miramar.

We have, I believe, the same endstate, which is a better San Diego area and a more profitable

San Diego area. This community is where we hang our hats as well.

Q) What do you expect from the Marines and Sailors aboard Miramar?

A) I need basic leadership. I need everyone to assume personal responsibility for matters... if you see something that needs fixin’ a) fix it yourself or b) find the right guy to notify so that it can be rectified.

I used to say when I was a squadron commander, “to do the right thing even if nobody is looking.” I’d like to modify that to “Do the right thing especially when nobody is looking.”

Q) Do you have a message you would like to send to the service members?

A) I’m excited about my stewardship of MCAS Miramar and as commander of Marine Corps Air Bases Western Area. I’m enthusiastic about the progress that we are going to make during my very brief time here. I’m looking forward to every aspect of this job.

MIRAMARKS

What type of activities have drawn you to the clubs on base in the past?



STAFF SGT. RANDY WALTON

Administration Chief
HMH-361

“Happy hours and buffet lunches.”

CPL. KRISTIAN GAMIAO

Aviation Technician
VMFA(AW)-242

“Hip-hop night and a popular social environment when civilians were allowed to come to the club.”



SGT. LEONARD VALESQUEZ

Administration Clerk
HMH-465

“It was the easiest place to go after coming back from deployments.”



Support your SNCO, E clubs



SGT. MAJ. THOMAS H. HOWARD
Sergeant Major
Marine Corps Air Bases Western Area

Commentary by Sgt. Maj. Thomas H. Howard

MCABWA Sergeant Major

The tradition of the Staff Noncommissioned Officers and Enlisted Clubs may have been forgotten. I would like to take a few minutes of your time to help us all

understand what your club can do for you. We need to take ownership of our clubs in order to have a quality facility that fosters comradeship among peers.

This should be a place where you, your friends, and family members are willing to participate in activities which are set up for your enjoyment.

The catch is I need your suggestions and ideas in order to help make changes. I welcome any input you may have to help the success of your clubs. Please start by contacting and knowing who your SNCO and Enlisted Advisory Board representatives

are. Make it a point to understand the existing policies and procedures when submitting a comment or recommendation.

Since my arrival in April I have heard many of you expressing concerns for our clubs. I took a few of them for immediate action and you can now expect a “Catfish Wednesday” buffet, and monthly advisory board meetings will commence starting in July!

Advisory board meetings are critical in the way for patrons to voice their opinions, appreciation, and or recommendations.

Some other ideas that have been brought to my attention are SNCO bosses’ night, all ranks bosses’ night, theme lunches and dinners, holding unit professional military education, weekend entertainment and more. Please seek out your representatives and HELP! The names and points of contact will be posted in your Club prior to our July meeting. Until then you can contact your sergeant major to inquire who your advisory board representative is.

Sgt. Maj. Howard Sends,
“Attack, attack, attack!”

FLIGHT JACKET

The *Flight Jacket* is published every Friday at no cost to the government by Military Guides, a private firm in no way connected with the Department of the Navy or the U.S. Marine Corps under an exclusively written contract with the U.S. Marine Corps.

This civilian enterprise newspaper is an authorized publication for the military services, contents of the *Flight Jacket* are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, the Department of Defense, Department of the Navy or U.S. Marine Corps.

It is for informational purposes only and in no way should be considered directive in nature.

The editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the Public Affairs Office. Comments or ques-

tions should be directed to ombpaoflight@miramar.usmc.mil. The appearance of advertising in this publication, including inserts or supplements, does not constitute endorsement by DoD or the Military Guides, of the products or service advertised.

Everything advertised in this publication must be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation or any other nonmerit factor of the purchaser, user or patron. All queries concerning business matters, display ads or paid classified ads should be directed to Military Guides, 9636 Tierra Grande, Suite 201, San Diego, CA 92126, or (858) 547-7343.



MAJ. GEN. KEITH J. STALDER
Commanding General
3rd Marine Aircraft Wing



BRIG. GEN. CARL B. JENSEN
Commander MCABWA
Commanding General
MCAS Miramar

MAJ. CURTIS HILL
Public Affairs Director
CAPT. MICHAEL J. FRIEL
Deputy Public Affairs Director
2nd Lt. Paul L. Croom II
Public Affairs Officer
Gunnery Sgt. Barry L. Pawelek
Public Affairs Chief
Staff Sgt. Chad McMeen
Internal Chief
Cpl. Jeff Zaccaro
Layout

Combat Correspondents:
Staff Sgt. Maria C. Brookman
Sgt. C. Nuntavong

Sgt. W.A. Napper Jr.
Sgt. Valerie A. Martinez
Sgt. Richard J. Kulleck
Sgt. Joshua A. Stueve
Sgt. Kristen L. Tull
Cpl. T.D. Smith
Cpl. Paul Leicht
Lance Cpl. Skye Jones

2nd Lt. Victoria S. Jennings
Staff Sgt. Houston F. White Jr.
Staff Sgt. A.C. Mink
Sgt. Nathan K. LaForte
Sgt. J.L. Zimmer III
Forward Deployed

Sovereignty transition means duty still calls in Iraq

Story by Cpl. Paula M. Fitzgerald

1st MarDiv Combat Correspondent

CAMP HURRICANE POINT, Iraq - Things haven't changed much for Lance Cpl. Michael A. McKissick since Iraq was declared a sovereign nation June 28th.

The 22-year-old assaultman with 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment said he still wakes up at the same time, eats two hot meals a day and performs the same duties he's done since arriving here a few months ago.

"No one really told us about what Iraq's sovereignty meant for us," he explained. "I guess things won't change for us too much."

According to Lt. Col. Paul Kennedy, battalion commander, the daily lives of his Marines and sailors will not be impacted by the transition of power from Coalition Provisional Authority to the Iraqi people.

"The day-to-day mission for the Marines will stay pretty much the same," Kennedy said. "But we have started to make a much less overt presence out in town during daylight hours."

That's a welcome change for the Marines.

As one infantryman put it, "The less we go out the less chance there is of us getting blown up."

Still, Kennedy said the battalion is making a few adjustments following Iraq's assumption of power.

The battalion's civil affairs section, headed by Maj. Kenneth D. Lindberg, was one of the few sections to be affected by the transition of sovereignty.

Lindberg said the section was receiving its funds from the Development Fund Iraq Commanders Emergency Response Program.

"The DFICERP is funded by the United Nations and will cease to exist as of July 1," Lindberg explained. "We'll now be getting funds from appropriated CERP funds, which come from American taxpayers."

Prior to June 28, the battalion spent approximately \$1.3 million on projects designed to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure in Ar Ramadi alone. The most expensive and recent of those projects is the construction of a new police station. Nearly \$500,000 was put toward the venture.

"Civil Affairs will now take a more subtle influence," Kennedy said. "Now the Iraqis are responsible for deciding how to spend the money."

The battalion repaired schools, donated medical supplies, handed out soccer balls and took on various other projects. As the end of June approached, the battalion began to receive less money for projects.

"We knew from the beginning that our funds would begin to diminish," Lindberg explained. "But we'll still have given about \$2.1 million by the time we rotate back home in September."

For future projects, the money will be given to representatives of the local government and they will choose where and how to spend it. But the Marines will continue to provide guidance if needed.

"A lot of our mission was to make sure the officials on the city level were capable of starting and completing projects on their own," Lindberg added. "It's going to be their show from now on. They'll be in charge of the bidding and contracting process."

Abdul Karim Barjis Al Rawy, governor of the Al Anbar province, is looking forward to getting to work.

During a visit to the Al Anbar Govern-

ment Center June 28, Kennedy and Barjis discussed the future of the province, which includes the cities of Ar Ramadi and Falluja.

With the Coalition taking a backseat in Iraq's daily affairs, Barjis said his job should become a little easier.

"Many Iraqis believe that by working with the Coalition, I am a traitor or a spy," he said. "They never really believed that the Coalition would give the country to the people. I believe now that it has actually happened my people will no longer think I am a traitor."

Barjis added he doesn't want the Coalition Forces to pack up and leave just yet. The danger of an anti-Iraqi uprising is still a worry for him and his staff.

That point was driven home during the

meeting between Kennedy and the governor.

As the two spoke, a dozen insurgents with rocket-propelled grenades and machineguns attacked the Ramadi Agricultural Center, where Marines man observation positions. The center is located about a mile from the governor's office. Five enemy combatants were killed and a handful more were injured. The Marines credited the Iraqi National Guard, who also operate posts in that area, with several of the kills.

Kennedy told the governor he should be proud because the city's security forces were doing well fighting off terrorists.

The governor said he was pleased but acknowledged that the Iraqi security forces are not fully developed yet. He said it'll take time to get stronger.

"There's still so many attacks and so much violence in Iraq that I believe we'll still need the Coalition from time to time," Barjis explained. "We don't need to work hand-in-hand any longer, but it's a good feeling to know that we have them behind us if we need them."

Kennedy reassured the governor that his Marines will continue to provide support.

"We will change nothing unless you ask," said Kennedy. "We want the Iraqi people to know that the Coalition is not going to get on a plane and just go home."

Barjis expressed his gratitude and said, "We don't want anything else from the Coalition right now except that you stay low and let us take care of our own problems. If we need you, then we will call you."

So I was thinkin' ...

Good-bye Corps, thanks

Commentary by Sgt. W.A. Napper Jr.

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Well, the time has finally come. It's time for me to hang up my boots and call it a day, leaving the Marine Corps behind as I set my sights toward the East Coast for a new life.

This decision was one of the most difficult I've ever had to make in my eight-year-career because it goes against a philosophy that has been a cornerstone for me thus far. My father, a 22-year Marine veteran, always told me to hang up my boots when I stopped having fun. Well, I'm not done having fun yet, and that's why this is so hard.

Being a public affairs Marine for my entire time I've come across countless Marines. During base tours and educators workshops I hear firsthand how the Marine Corps has made them grow up and be responsible adults. A little more than three months ago I hit this milestone and it sealed the fate on my career as a Marine.

I think the true moment of adulthood finally comes not when you're self-sufficient or when you can plan a budget or even when you finally fight the urge to turn down the radio in the car. I think it comes when you actually realize that the purpose of your life isn't about you, but about making life better for someone else. For me that moment came March 10, shortly after 1 a.m.

Up until that moment I had only been playing with the notion of getting out, even though I went through the Transition Assistance Program class and had taken care of my final physical. Even if you're not sure, it's always good to cover the bases. I'd say I was about 60 percent toward getting out and 40 percent wanting to reenlist. Sitting on that fence can be painful sometimes, especially on those nights when you lie awake and wonder what you should do, what would be best and can someone please just give me a sign. Well friends and neighbors, I got that sign on March 10.

After I came back from Operation Iraqi Freedom (my fifth deployment throughout my time) my wife Stephanie and I decided that after almost four years of marriage we wanted to try to have a baby. It didn't take long, and we soon bought a crib and stroller, and started looking at clothing that was impossibly small. The only thing this joyous news did was reaffirm that maybe I should reenlist. I came up with a multitude of reasons, everything from the economy and job security to health care – even if it was Navy medicine.

Nine months later, March 10 shortly after 1 a.m., the most beautiful little girl was born with a head of red hair and the bluest blue eyes I've ever seen. As I held her for the first time I looked into those eyes and realized that I

See GOOD-BYE, page 11

Send your letters or opinions to the Flight Jacket editor. Include your name, rank and unit, and send to: mcmeence@miramar.usmc.mil.

Home Depot provides tool time for local Marines



Cpl. Nathaniel P. Weibert, military police, MWSS-373, from Clovis, Calif. hands Spc. Phong S. Nguyen, driver, 478th Transportation Company, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., a Rigid cordless drill while Rosa Carmona and Rick P. Franklin, Home Depot employees, grab another drill to hand the servicemembers. Photo by Sgt. C. Nuntavong

Story by Cpl. T.D. Smith

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Miramar Marines took center stage at a local Home Depot parking lot June 23 to help Marines and Soldiers abroad. Miramar Marines teamed up with other local service members and Home Depot staff to load trucks with \$1 million worth of construction supplies and tools to be distributed by 1st Marine Expeditionary Force to personnel in Iraq.

"Home Depot has a long standing history of supporting the military. We were looking for a big thing to do to support our troops," said Eric Oberman, public relations manager for Home Depot. "We have employees that serve (in the armed forces) and we asked them what living conditions were like and what day-to-day life was like. We asked what products they needed and what they could benefit from."

Major Mike Jernigan, an active duty officer in the Marine Corps who holds the title of National Corporate Fellow for Home Depot explained, "Bob Nardelli (chair executive officer of Home Depot) wanted to give a gift to Soldiers and Marines overseas. (So I) coordinated with logistics from (1st Marine Expeditionary

Force) to get a wish list from Marines."

Gunnery Sergeant Martin Harkless, engineer chief, Marine Wing Support Group 37, explained this is how Marines got involved with beginning of the evolution.

"Wing asked (Miramar Marines) to put together a wish list," he said. "Things they need that they don't currently have."

That wish list found its way to a benefactor that was eager to supply the request.

Jernigan said he thought it was a great project for two reasons, "It's like a Christmas gift (to the Marines abroad). Also, having been over there, it is going to raise morale. Hundreds of letters to the troops (from the community) are going with the tools.

"It is the intangible that makes the difference. People in America are thinking of us and our families," he added.

Harkless echoed the sentiment, "I think this is one of the events we can all be proud of. Troops are getting good gear and quality tools that the Marine Corps didn't have to pay for.

It is one of the best gifts the Marine Corps has gotten all year plus it will help the Iraqi people too. The MWSG thanks Home Depot. "

'Bats' employ new 'Death from the Darkness' capabilities

Story by Sgt. Valerie A. Martinez

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION YUMA, Ariz. – A squadron of FA/18Ds was recently equipped with improved technology that will allow it to better employ “Death from the Darkness.”

Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 242, currently deployed here from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., to support Desert Talon 2-04, is the first Hornet squadron to be equipped with a self-contained, multi-sensor laser designating and navigation system.

The Litening Pod, as described by its maker, the Northrop Grumman Corporation, “provides tactical aircraft with 24-hour precision strike capability against both land and sea-based targets.” This enables fighter pilots to “detect, acquire, track and identify ground targets for highly accurate delivery of both conventional and precision-guided weapons.”

According to Allen. D. Boettcher, a field service engineer with Northrop Grumman’s Defensive Systems Division, the system incorporates all of the targeting features a pilot could need into a single high speed, low maintenance pod.

At a hefty 460 pounds, the pod comes equipped with a high-resolution, Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) sensor, an Infrared Laser Marker, two charged coupled device (CCD-TV) digital cameras, a Laser Spot Tracker/Rangefinder and a multifunctional tracker, all the tools Chief Warrant Officer 3 Bryan S. Teet

said a pilot needs to accurately identify and hit a target.

“On the earlier system you could identify a target on your screen and even generalize that it was a tank. But with this third generation FLIR, we may be able to even see exactly what the make and model of that tank is,” added the VMFA(AW)-242 avionics officer.

Capt. Neal B. Wynn, a weapons systems operator with VMFA(AW)-242, agreed that the improved capabilities that the Litening Pod FLIR brings to any aircrew is enormous.

“It’s awesome. Our ability to detect and discriminate targets has greatly improved with the pods higher quality, better resolution images,” he added.

Boettcher, a retired gunnery sergeant, said the Infrared Laser Marker, when used in conjunction with night vision goggles, “allows a pilot to more accurately drop precision guided missiles right on target and limits a lot of friendly fire.”

The two CCD-TV cameras, which come equipped with narrow and wide-angle lenses, can obtain target imagery and be a valuable aerial reconnaissance resource to ground commanders.

“The camera is a great help when we debrief because it records exactly what the pod sees. We can go back and provide exact intelligence as to what targets we were engaging on the battlefield,” added Wynn, a native of Hurricane, Utah.

One of the greatest assets of the Litening Pod, said Teet, is the Laser Spot Tracker/Rangefinder. “It can find the



MWSS-242 recently received four Litening Pods - a self-contained, multi-sensor laser designating and navigation system. The “Bats” are the first Marine Corps Hornet Squadron to receive and use the pods operationally. Photo by Sgt. Valerie A. Martinez

target that another friendly on the ground or in another aircraft is guiding us to. With the LST the pilots can see the laser and accurately drop bombs on their target.”

Initial research and development for Litening I began in 1992 at the Rafael Corporation in Israel for use in the Israel Air Force. Northrop Grumman later teamed with Rafael for further development and sale of the pod as it was integrated it into a wide array of combat aircraft operated by various services and allies.

In 2000, the Marine Corps’ AV-8B

Harrier community received its first set of Litening Pods and has since continued testing and evaluating the system on its aircraft, including the F/A-18D, at the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division, China Lake, Calif.

Although the pod has been tested on the Hornet, Teet said VMFA(AW)-242 is the first squadron to receive and use it operationally.

Currently, the “Bats” have four pods and hope “to get as many jets as possible to have Litening Pod capabilities,” he

See PODS, page 11

Arabic class opens cultural window at Desert Talon

Story by Cpl. Paul Leicht

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION YUMA, Ariz. – Whether standing a guard post, carrying out a mission or delivering humanitarian supplies, most Marines deploying to Iraq will more than likely need to communicate with local Arabic-speaking Iraqis. Knowing what to say and how to say it can help ensure a successful mission, improve interaction with locals or even help save a life.

Working beyond their current mission to establish and administer Marine aviation operations during Desert Talon 2-04, Marines with Marine Tactical Air Command Squadron 38 are learning how to speak with Iraqis in their own Arabic dialect during classroom instruction in the field here.

“Learning the basic language skills for the Iraqi Arabic dialect will help Marines better understand the Iraqi people on various levels,” said Cpl. Christopher Lujan, S-3, MTACS-38. “This Arabic class will give (the Marines) the basic language survival tools they will need once they get to Iraq. I’m teaching the class using a Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Survival Guide for the Iraqi dialect which covers commands,



A Marine with MTACS-38 inspects an Iraqi Language Skills Guide and Command & Control Card after attending a basic Arabic class during Desert Talon 2-04. Photo by Cpl. Paul Leicht

warnings, instructions and also covers helpful words phrases and questions.”

Lujan, a former student at DLI, who deployed to Iraq last year, said he has a high interest in the language and knows firsthand how important knowing the local language can be, especially in a hostile environment.

“It’s vital that we as Marines have some basic level of understanding of the Iraqi dialect,” explained Lujan. “The more they know about the culture and history of the Iraqi people, then they will interact with them more effectively whether it is out on an Iraqi street, back on base, at a bazaar or the chow hall. Anyone who deploys to Iraq or anywhere in the Middle East really needs to learn and understand the basics of Arabic.”

HMH-465 returns to states after 8 month deployment

Story by Sgt. Nathan K. LaForte

MAG-16 Combat Correspondent

AL ASAD, Iraq - Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465, Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, has started the retrograde that will see all the squadron's Marines safely back at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.

The advanced party for the squadron, led by Maj. Jeff S. Chestney, executive officer, HMH-465, left Iraq June 21 for the long trip home.

The CH-53E Super Stallion squadron's journey throughout their recent 8-month deployment wasn't easy since it began only a short time after their return from the last phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Chestney claimed.

"The advance party from the last OIF was only at home for three months before going to Okinawa, Japan," the 37-year-old officer said. "We've gone all the way around the world, and we've done it the hard way."

Their Magellan-esque trip across the globe brought them initially to Marine Corps Air Station Futemna, on Okinawa, Japan, in late November 2003. The "Warhorses" got the warning that they were again returning to Iraq shortly after they arrived, claimed Lance Cpl. Calvin L. Brown, aviation operations specialist, HMH-465.

"It was a surprise, but we knew it might happen again," the 22-year-old said. "We weren't caught off guard, but we didn't think it would happen so soon." The "Warhorses" arrived in Iraq late February of this year and immediately noticed that not just the mission of the Marines changed. A few other things had changed as well, according to Cpl. Jennifer L. Barker, maintenance administration clerk, HMH-465.

"Last year we were in a more secure place," the 21-year-old said. "This year, there is a lot more stuff going

on around us. There are areas immediately surrounding us where people are dying."

This time around, the heavy-lift squadron was positioned in country instead of flying missions from aboard the *USS Boxer*, Brown stated. This put the squadron in a different mindset than before, he added.

"This time was harder," the Columbia, S.C., native said. "We knew we were in harm's way and more directly involved with the fighting this time. We didn't have the safe haven of being on the boat."

Since their arrival in country, the "Warhorses" have weathered some pretty tough times, said Sgt. Kou Her, ground support equipment mechanic, HMH-465. The worst of these are the indirect-fire attacks their base has sustained, the 27-year-old noted, but these have just bonded these devil dogs closer together.

"You're a victim," the St. Paul, Minn., native said. "You start to really care for the person next to you and look out for that other person. You develop a sense of caring for your comrade."

"It's the hard, stressful times the squadron has faced that have developed a bond between the Marines," Barker claimed.

"It helps people open up and trust in each other," the Trenton, Tenn., native, revealed. "We're all we have out here and it becomes like a big family."

She added that this family has overcome a lot in



Advanced party Marines from HMH-465 load an Air Force C-130 cargo plane at Al Asad, Iraq. The plane was headed for Kuwait in the early morning hours of June 22, and its passengers were headed back to the U.S. after deployments in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Photo by Sgt. Nathan K. LaForte

their time since leaving home last November. Times were especially turbulent for Sgt. Michael J. Sela, CH-53E Super Stallion mechanic and quality assurance representative, HMH-465, even before he arrived with his squadron in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"My father passed away while we were in Okinawa before we came here," the 23-year-old, Everett, Wash., native said. "Things aren't going to be the same when I get home, but I still have a lot to look forward to."

While some Marines had to overcome personal tragedy, others overcame professional obstacles to better themselves and their squadron, Barker explained.

See RETURN, page 11

Longest serving carrier docks in San Diego

Story by Cpl. T.D. Smith

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

San Diego is home to a wealth of entertainment, but now it has a little more “magic,” as the museum’s brochure promotes it, to offer Miramar Marines and Sailors. America’s longest-serving aircraft carrier, the *USS Midway*, is now the San Diego Carrier Museum.

It offers a unique look into the vessel’s history, which spans more than four decades of naval service to include the surrender of Japan in World War II to operations during Desert Storm.

The entertainment experience is educational and historically accurate with an audio-guided tour that features first-hand accounts from former crewmembers.

One account documents how two sailors were killed in the liquid oxygen plant station, when a Panamanian merchant ship, the *Cactus*, hit the *Midway*. The *USS Midway* was performing silent night maneuvers with out radar and communication, when the carrier collided in the black of night with the commercial boat.

While no significant harm was sustained by *Midway*’s structure, three of the F-4 phantoms parked on the deck were damaged.

Crew accounts also include information on the capabilities of the ship. One such explanation describes what it is like using the ship’s Frensel lens and why landing pilots calls it the “meatball.”

The pilot illustrated how they knew the aircraft was on the correct path of approach when they could see an orange light or “the meatball.”

Other features open to the public are one of the *Midway*’s five galleys and the berthing spaces where the crew slept. These features provide perspective on what it was like to live on a city at sea.

The museum also highlights the fact that a majority of the *Midway*’s missions were humanitarian. Such missions include “Frequent Wind” which took place during the fall of Saigon. Helicopters, from *Midway*’s deck evacuated 3,073 U.S. personnel and Vietnamese refugees out of Saigon and brought them to safety.

After a South Vietnamese pilot asked permission to land, the *Midway*’s crew cleared an angle of the deck where the pilot could safely land his Cessna O-1 Bird Dog observation plane with his wife and five children aboard.

The *Midway*’s crew was subsequently awarded the Navy Unit Commendation and the Humanitarian Service Medal for her efforts.

One mission that was more combative was the historic launch of a captured German V-2 rocket. Operation “Sandy” took place September 6, 1947. The purpose of the maneuver was to see if a large rocket could be launched from a moving platform, like an aircraft carrier, without modifications.

This operation changed Naval combat in a significant way by including technologies of sea launched high power weaponry.

History and ship life are not the only attractions this majestic floating city has to offer. There are two varieties simulators avail-

See **SHIP**, page 10



The *USS Midway*, docked alongside the Navy Pier in the San Diego Harbor, is the nation’s newest and largest aircraft carrier museum. The *Midway* opened for business June 7. Photo by Lance Cpl. Edward R. Guevara Jr.

Bull riders hang on for eight-second ride of their life

Story by Lance Cpl. Skye Jones

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

A common phrase in bull riding is “It’s not if you get hurt, it’s when.”

Servicemembers in the Professional Armed Forces Rodeo Association deal with that dilemma every time they strap on to an approximately 2,000 pound bucking bull. But, their glory comes after the ride when they experience a sense of accomplishment and pride. Their skills were recently put to the test in at the San Diego County Fair June 19 and 20 where they competed for prizes totaling \$10,000.

There are seven events in a sanctioned rodeo: bull riding, bareback bronc riding, saddle bronc riding, steer wrestling, team roping, barrel racing and calf roping. Bull riding is considered to be one of the more risky events in the rodeo and one of the most dangerous sports in the world.

A bull rider puts himself in jeopardy each time he gets up on a raging bull. He makes an effort to stay on top of the bull for eight seconds for a wild ride of fury. His strongest hand is strapped to the bull while the other hand is left free to help keep his balance.

“The risk factor is very high in this sport. I broke my leg in my last competition and I am waiting for it to heal to get back out there again,” mentioned Petty Officer 3rd Class Eric Coker, maintenance machinist, Southwest Region Maintenance Center, and California Circuit director for PAFRA.

“Bull riding is 90 percent mental and 10 percent physical. You have to have your head in the right place,” added the Bakersfield, Calif., native.

One levelheaded cowboy from Miramar competed in the bull-riding event and ended up getting bucked off on his first ride, resulting in minor injuries. He fell off onto the ground on all fours, where his bull ran over his back legs. However, Cpl. Joseph L. Dickens, airframes hydraulic mechanic, Marine Aircraft Group 16 got right back up on his bull for the next round.

“When I’m up on the bull I try to focus on what he’s doing. I try my best to balance myself and I always make sure I am one step ahead,” explained the Colorado



Marines from the Professional Armed Forces Rodeo Association competed in the bull riding competition at the San Diego County Fair. Anyone can join the association and participate in any of the seven rodeo events. *Photo by Lance Cpl. Skye Jones.*

Springs, Colo., native. “Also, I go into the event with a clear mind. If I think that I am going to mess up it will happen. You must have a positive mind set,”

Though bull riding is dangerous, it and other events in the rodeo continue to draw in many risk takers and spectators who find enjoyment in watching the excitement.

“It’s just the greatest. Whether you win or lose, you can still have a great time. To me the rodeo as a whole is all about personal accomplishment,” said Coker. “You are competing mainly against yourself, trying to be the best you can be.”

To find out more information or to join PAFRA, contact Coker at (909) 834-4224 or Dickens at (303) 596-0140 or e-mail Coker at eric.coker@navy.mil.



A rodeo clown deters a bull during the San Diego County fair rodeo. *Photo by Lance Cpl. Skye Jones.*

San Diego Fourth of July celebrations

San Diego Bay
9 p.m., (858) 751-5755
Coronado
9 p.m., (619) 437-8788
Sea World
9:50 p.m., (619) 226-3901
Mission Bay Yatch Club
8:45 p.m., (858) 488-0501

Brengle Terrace Park
9 p.m. (760) 726-1340
La Jolla Cove
9 p.m., (858) 454-1444
Mira Mesa Community Park
9 p.m. (858) 271-0419
Ocean Beach Pier
9:05 p.m., (619) 226-8613

Oceanside Pier
9 p.m. (760) 754-4512
Chula Vista Yacht Harbor
9 p.m., (619) 585-5682
Del Mar Fairgrounds
9 p.m. (858) 755-1161
El Cajon Speedway
9 p.m., (619) 448-8900

Religious Services

The Chaplain's Office is located in building 5632 and coordinates regularly-scheduled worship services. For the location and meeting schedules of religious activities contact the Chaplain's Office at 577-1333.

Sunday:

9:30 a.m. Protestant worship service
11 a.m. Roman Catholic Eucharist

Wednesday:

7 p.m. Baptist service

Monday-Friday:

11:30 a.m. Roman Catholic Daily Mass

Jewish:

7 p.m. First Friday of the month MCRD
7:30 p.m. Last Friday at Edson Range Chapel

Change of Command

MALS-11

Lt. Col. S.A. Reynolds will relinquish Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 11 to Lt. Col. Daniel Gillan in a change of command ceremony July 9 at 2 p.m in Hangar 1.

Send your change of command notices to the Flight Jacket editor at mcmeence@miramar.usmc.mil. Include all who, what, where and when information.



Mrs. Semper Fi

Marine Corps and Navy spouses, active duty females and veterans are wanted for the upcoming 2004 Ms. Semper Fi Pageant to be held in September.

No experience is required and there is no swimsuit or talent competitions. Pageant is open to females 18 years of age or older, and space is limited to the first 30 applicants.

For more informations visit their Web site at www.clix.to/pageant or call (909) 695-7222.

DD Association

The Designated Drivers Association is looking for volunteers. Volunteers can meet new people, earn extra money in tips and make a difference.

Volunteers must be at least 18 and have a valid drivers license and insurance. For more information, visit www.ddasd.org or call (866) 373-7233.

Modified gate hours

The East Gate will now be closed from 12-5 a.m. Flightline gates 5 and 22 will be fully automated with all access being granted through card swipes until notified otherwise.

Alcoholics Anonymous

Alcoholics Anonymous meetings are now taking place at the Marine Corps Community Services Counseling Center in building 2274. The classes will be held Monday through Wednesday from 6:30-7:30 p.m.

All active duty personnel, retirees, family members and DoD employees can participate.

For more information call 577-7285.

Postal overload

Remember to check your military mail box daily and to check out with the post office when going on leave or TAD for 15 or more days at a time.

TRANSFER

continued from page 1

we want a country that is a source of peace and stability for the whole world.'"

Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, who reportedly sought the early transfer, expressed confidence in his government's ability to stabilize the violence-racked country. "This is a historical day," he said. "We feel we are capable of controlling the security situation."

A poll cited in a Defense Department document called "Five Steps to Sovereignty" said 68 percent of Iraqis have confidence in the interim Iraqi government, and 79 percent think the interim government will make things better for Iraq. The new government has an 80-percent approval rating among Iraqis, 73 percent of whom approve of Allawi, and 84 percent of whom approve of Yawar.

The document said the interim government will operate under the rules defined in Iraq's Transitional Administrative Law, which it called "the most liberal basic governance document in the Arab world."

At a farewell meeting June 27 with the city, regional and provincial councils in Baghdad, Bremer expressed confidence in the new government's ability to take over Iraq's affairs.

"When I arrived in Baghdad in May last year, the city was still on fire from the looters," Bremer said. "There was not a single policeman on duty in the entire city. Not in Baghdad, not in Basra, not anywhere in the country. We were producing 300 megawatts of electricity in the entire country. A lot has gotten better."

Iraq now has 100,000 police officers on duty across the country, Bremer said. "There are not enough yet in Baghdad," he added. "Schools and clinics and hospitals have been reopened, though much

has to be done to improve health care in Baghdad and in the country."

The now ex-administrator expressed optimism to the council members for Iraq's future. "I am very confident that Iraq in fact will get through this process of political development and will wind up as a beacon for countries in the region as Iraq has so often been in its very long 5,000-year history," he said. "The reason I'm confident is because of people like you, people all over the country who are willing to take up the job and the responsibility for Iraq, because the most important thing that happens when sovereignty returns to the Iraqi government is responsibility returns to the Iraqi people."

Bremer assured the Iraqi leaders that they won't have to go it alone. "We will still be here to help you," he said. "The multinational forces will still be here to help with security until the Iraqi forces are able on their own to deal with security. The American government will be here in the form of a very large American Embassy, which will help work with Iraqis to oversee the reconstruction projects which are now beginning already to make an impact on the Iraqi economy."

The United States will spend almost \$19 billion in Iraq over the next 15 to 18 months, Bremer said, much of it on rebuilding of old infrastructure like electricity, water and sewage systems.

Another transfer took place earlier, as all five Iraqi armed forces recruiting centers formally were placed under the Iraqi defense ministry. The ceremony was conducted on a 227-applicant recruiting day - a single-day high for June, officials said. The transfer was largely a formality, officials added, as the recruiting efforts at the country's stations in Baghdad, Basrah, Mosul, Sulaymaniyah and Irbil have been almost entirely Iraqi-run for nearly two months.

SHIP

continued from page 7

able to visitors. The type featuring a cockpit with a hatch that closes costs \$40 an hour and the 15 ft TV screen arcade model can be played for \$10 for a half hour.

A unique dining experience can be found on the carrier's aft deck. The Fantail Café offers an assortment of beverages, cookies and sandwiches in an open-air setting.

The progress of the museum will continue as new exhibits such as the opening of the brig

and sickbay become available to the public.

The Midway is open seven days a week to exclude major holidays and the hours of operation are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission fees are \$13 for adults \$10 for seniors, military ID and student ID card holders, and \$7 for youths ages six to 17. Active duty military members in uniform and children under the age of six get in free.

The museum also features a gift shop where tourists and locals alike memorialize their Midway magic experience picking up clothing and other commemorative items.

GOOD-BYE continued from page 4

was finally an adult. I had reached that moment when the purpose of my life was to make her life as perfect and wonderful as I could. I knew I couldn't do it being in the Marines.

I had to leave the family I've known for about 20 of my 26 years for the betterment of my new family. I would now have to find a job, and not just any job, but one that could properly enhance the quality of life for my wife and little baby girl. Up until now the hardest thing I've ever done was survive boot camp. I knew this next task would far surpass that goal.

As a sergeant I often wonder if I've left a mark on my Marines, thus leaving a mark on the Corps. I wonder if in a few years a newly-promoted sergeant will adopt a leadership philosophy because "that's the way Sgt. Napper did it, and I think that's right." I can only hope so.

Looking through my graduation yearbook from Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego I realize that there was only one goal that I didn't get to achieve while in the Corps – being a drill instructor. Like the cadence is called, "I want to be a drill instructor. I want to cut off all of my hair. I want to go to Parris Island. I want to wear that Smokey Bear." Sure, I've won awards – I was named Marine Corps Journalist of the Year

a few years back, and I've received medals and awards for my achievements, but I never really wanted any of that. All I've ever wanted was to leave my mark on the Corps.

Looking at that old graduation yearbook at my fellow recruits from 3rd Battalion, Lima Company, Platoon 3038, I realize that I have. If nothing else I made it through the most challenging organization known to man – the United States Marine Corps. I'll always look back with fond memories and will never speak ill of my Corps. As my family and I roll through the North Gate Monday morning my heart will be with all of you as you start your day and continue to protect America and freedom.

But for those of you who put money in the office pool for how long it will be before ol' Napper tries to rejoin the Corps, I can tell you one thing as I look into my daughter's beautiful blue eyes – for those of you who bet I'd never come back, congratulations on your pay day. Semper Fidelis, Marines!

PODS continued from page 5

added. "We are familiarizing ourselves with the Litening Pod and testing its capabilities with the F/A-18 so we can potentially use them in the future."

The maintainers and aircrew received an accelerated course on the Litening Pod

and how to configure it to the aircraft shortly before deploying for Desert Talon 2-04 and are using the two-week exercise to attain hands-on experience with the system.

"We usually like to spend a week with the maintainers and a week with the pilots, but because of this exercise we had to speed things up," said Boettcher. "All the Marines picked it up very quickly though."

Cpl Jacob. A. Troxel, a communications navigation technician with VMFA(AW)-242's avionics shop, said despite the fact that the information was crammed into a two-day crash course, he is confident that the squadron's maintainers can handle anything that may come up.

"It's pretty easy to understand, and it's going to save us a lot of time and energy," added the 23-year-old Toole, Utah, native. "It's more reliable than the old system and a lot easier to configure."

Troxel said the Litening Pod is a great asset for the pilots and aircrew, and he hopes to see it fully integrate into the Corps.

"I think the Marine Corps should invest in the Litening Pod for all its F/A-18s. It helps everyone to better accomplish their mission."

RETURN continued from page 6

Goals and accomplishments, like attaining aircrew designators and combat aircrew designators, are goals to be proud of, she added.

"I am most proud of getting my aerial observer qualifications and (combat aircrew) wings," she stated.

For the squadron's leadership, they accomplished more than they had originally planned, Chestney explained.

"We're just proud that we're bringing back everyone we took," the Alton, Ill., native described. "We've far exceeded all expectations. We've flown three times what we normally fly."

Expectations aren't over yet for the weary squadron of Marines even after their return to their home base, Chestney reiterated. The squadron is conducting a relief in place with two Marine Expeditionary Units.

The West coast squadron will transfer all of its Super Stallions to the MEU detachments and leave for Miramar with nothing.

When they arrive, the advance party for the "Warhorses" will begin the rebuilding process all over again, Chestney explained.